

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 14851 240636Z

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ACTION EA-14

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UNCLAS BANGKOK 14851

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS PFOR, TH, LA

SUBJECT: THANOM ON LAOS AND THAI VOLUNTEERS

FOLLOWING IS AN UNOFFICIAL USIS TRANSLATION OF SELECTED COMMENTS
ON LAOS OF PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTICHAKORN DURING HIS
SEPTEMBER 19 PRESS CONFERENCE:

1. AS SOON AS AGREEMENT WAS REACHED ON THE SETTING UP OF A
COALITION GOVERNMENT, IS SENT A LETTER OF CONGRATULATIONS TO
PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA, EXPRESSING BEST WISHES THAT THERE
WILL BE COOPERATION IN DEVELOPMENT OF LAOS AND THAT LASVMTING
PEACE WILL BE ENJOYED. BUT I DON'T KNOW WHETHER OUR HOPE
WILL COME TRUE OR NOT, THEREFORE WE MUST BE FULLY PREPARED AND
ON OUR GUARD IN THE MEANWHILE.

2. REPORTER: AFTER COALITION GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN SET UP, WILL
WE KNOW THE DEFINITE NUMBER OF THAIS WHO HAVE CROSSED OVER TO
FIGHT IN LAOS AND WHETHER THEY WILL RETURN HOME?

3. THANOM: WE DON'T KNOW YET WHAT IS THE TOTAL NUMBER OF
THAIS WHO WENT TO FIGHT IN LAOS.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 BANGKO 14851 240636Z

4. REPORTER: WILL THOSE WHO WERE TAKEN PRISONER BE RELEASED AND

SENT BACK TO THAILAND?

5. THANOM: IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LAO GOVERNMENT TO HOLD NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PATHET LAOS BECAUSE THOSE THAIS WENT AND VOLUNTEERED TO FIGHT FOR THE LAO GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE NEVER SENT TROOPS TO FIGHT IN LAOS SO HOW COULD WE HOLD NEGOTIATIONS. IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LAOS GOVERNMENT TO HOLD NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PATHET LAOS.

6. REPORTER: BUT THOSE MEN ARE THAIS.

7. THANOM: THAT'S TRUE AND THE THAI GOVERNMENT HAS CONTACTED THE LAO GOVERNMENT WITH A REQUEST FOR IT TO ENDEAVOR TO HAVE THOSE MEN SENT HOME. BUT THE HOLDING OF NEGOTIATIONS IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE LAOS GOVERNMENT. WE CANNOT HOLD DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PATHET LAOS.

8. REPORTER: THERE WAS A REPORT PUBLISHED IN NEWSPAPERS THIS MORNING STATING THAT PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE IN WHICH HE ASKED THE THAI GOVERNMENT TO CHASE LAOS REBELS IN THAILAND OUT OF OUR COUNTRY.

9. THANOM: NOT CHASE THEM OUT. HE SAID IT WOULD BE GOOD IF THESE LAO POLITICAL REFUGEES LEFT OUR COUNTRY AND WENT TO SOME PLACE FAR AWAY FROM LAOS. THIS IS SIMILAR TO THE EFFORTS WE MADE TO PERSUADE UNNU TO LEAVE OUR COUNTRY AND HE HAS GONE TO AMERICA NOW. THAT GREATLY PLEASED BURMESE LEADERS.

10. REPORTER: DOES THAT MEAN THAT PRINCE SOUVANNA PHOUMA HAS MADE A REQUEST ALREADY...

11. THANOM: HE HAS MADE CONTACT WITH ME.

12. REPORTER: DOES THAT MEAN THEY WILL BE COMPELLED TO LEAVE THAILAND?

13. NO COMPULSION WILL BE USED, BUT IF THE GOVERNMENT CAN FIND A WAY TO PERSUADE THEM TO LEAVE OUR COUNTRY, IT WOULD BE GOOD.

14. REPORTER: WILL YOU TAKE ACTION AS REQUESTED?
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 BANGKO 14851 240636Z

15. THANOM: WE WILL TRY OUR BEST BECAUSE WE DO NOT WANT THEM TO GO AND CREATE TROUBLE IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY, ESPECIALLY BECAUSE ANY TROUBLE THEY CREATE HAS REPERCUSSIONS ON THAILAND ALSO.

16. REPORTER: DO WE HAVE A PLAN FOR GENERAL PHOUMI NOSAVAN TO GO AND LIVE IN SOUTH THAILAND AGAIN?

17. THANOM: HE IS ENGAGED IN WORK HERE NOW AND HE IS KEPT UNDER CLOSE WATCH BY OUR AUTHORITIES.

ANOTHER QUESTION IS ON THAI MERCENARIES IN LAOS. THOUGH THEY ARE NOT THAI REGULARS, SINCE THERE IS A CEASEFIRE AGREEMENT IN LAOS NOW THE QUESTION IS WHETHER THE GOVERNMENT HAS RECEIVED ANY INFORMATION WHEN THEY WILL BE WITHDRAWN AND RETURN TO THAILAND. WHEN THEY RETURN, WHAT PREPARATIONS HAS THE GOVERNMENT MADE TO PROVIDE WORK FOR THEM IN ORDER TO PREVENT A SOCIAL PROBLEM FROM BEING FACED.

THE THAI GOVERNMENT DID NOT SEND THEM TO FIGHT BUT THEY CROSSED OVER ON THEIR OWN AND VOLUNTEERED TO FIGHT FOR THE LAO GOVERNMENT. THEREFORE, WHEN THEY WILL BE WITHDRAWN IS UP TO THE LAO GOVERNMENT, OR IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF PERSONS WHO HIRED THEM TO GO AND FIGHT IN LAOS, NOT THE RESPONSIBILITY OF OUR GOVERNMENT. THE LAO GOVERNMENT MIGHT STOP HIRING THESE THAIS SINCE IT NO LONGER NEEDS THEM TO FIGHT FOR IT. IN REGARD TO MAKING PREPARATIONS TO PROVIDE WORK FOR THESE THAIS WHEN THEY RETURN TO THAILAND, IT WILL BE NECESSARY TO KNOW WHAT KIND OF WORK THEY WANT AND BASIC FACTS REGARDING THEIR SKILL IN VARIOUS OCCUPATIONS FIRST, IN ORDER TO BE ABLE TO GIVE THEM AID PROPERLY AND AS DESIRED. WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT OCCUPATIONS THEY WERE ENGAGED IN ORIGINALLY, WHETHER THEY WERE FARMERS OR PLANTERS, AND WHETHER THEY MIGHT INTEND TO RETURN TO THEIR ORIGINAL OCCUPATIONS.

18. REPORTER: I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW THEIR APPROXIMATE NUMBER.

19. THANOM: NEWSPAPER REPORTS AND FOREIGN RADIO BROADCASTS SAY THEY TOTAL OVER 10,000.

20. REPORTER: COULD THAT BE FAIRLY ACCURATE?

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 BANGKO 14851 240636Z

21. THANOM: IT MIGHT BE. IT SHOULD BE BORNE IN MIND THAT THE THAI-LAO BORDER IS HUNDREDS OF KILOMETERS LONG AND PEOPLE LIVING ALONG IT HAVE RELATIVES IN BOTH COUNTRIES.
MASTERS

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